

5-17-1948

## Correspondence, Wayne Morse, John C. Stennis, May 17-24, 1948

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May 17, 1948

Hon. Wayne Morse  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Morse:

I am writing this letter, not as a politician or a self seeker in any direction, but as one who loves his country and his fellow man. It may be said parenthetically, that I vote independently, always striving to put men and principles above party. I was "born and raised" in a Southern community largely populated by negroes, and count my contacts with my black friends as a rich experience. I have also been privileged to work with the best class of negroes in civic matters designed to help the race.

From time to time I have been forced to the conclusion that a certain type of Northern politicians seems intent on occasion to treat the South as a conquered province. Surely this is due to a gross misconception of conditions in this part of the country. Let it be said that the people down here are no different from those who live in other sections. They are in the main actuated by high and lofty motives, and most of them have humanitarian instincts which govern their intercourse with others of whatever race or creed. These people do not believe in injustice of any kind, and therefore abhor the dastardly crime called lynching, which, by the way, has about reached the vanishing point. While in some sections of the South the negro population outnumbers that of the whites, they as a rule live side by side amicably and with thorough good will. This may not be understandable to some who live in other parts of our Nation, and who have only a long range view of a complicated question concerning which they profess to know more than do those of us who are in constant contact with it.

You no doubt recall the Biblical reference to the mote and the beam, but this pertinent observation is too often forgotten. That injustices have existed and still exist in diminishing measure, is undeniable, but these are gradually and progressively being adjusted through orderly processes and not by any sort of legal compulsion. It should be axiomatic that no true reform ever came by the use of violent methods, such as are involved in the so-called Civil Rights Program, which you advocate. There is quite a difference between civil rights and social rights, and every individual and race will ultimately receive according to his or its deserving. This is a gradual process which will require time and patience on the part of all concerned. True reform always comes through evolutionary instead of revolutionary methods, and no people ever rose by mere wishful thinking.

I believe the so-called anti-lynch law and the poll tax law to be contrary to the provisions of our Constitution, and it is pertinent to observe that many who prate

about the Constitution appear to be more than willing to enforce their arbitrary constructions of the provisions of that document by means which are themselves unconstitutional. Segregation and choice of working associates are purely matters of individual choice. Social and intellectual equality cannot be legislated. They come through deserving, and not demanding. All the people of the South, whether white or black, deserve the sympathetic consideration of their fellow citizens in the solution of this tremendous problem, rather than the constant stirring up of strife which is an unnecessary as it is futile. If the situation were reversed, the thinking white people of the North would feel on this subject exactly as do those of the South, and I am convinced that the better element of our Southern negroes would much prefer to be left alone to work out their salvation in all these matters hand in hand with their white friends.

In view of all this I make bold to call upon you as a member of the United States Senate, and not as a Senator from Oregon, to cast aside whatever misconceptions you may have, and whatever prejudices you may have formed, and to instead do something to propel, rather than to hold back, the wheels of progress which have been rolling forward through the years in spite of what may be said by misguided doctrinaires or designing politicians. And I respectfully add that no true friend of the negro and no understanding American will strive to force by arbitrary and unjust laws the solution of an issue which, under God, is rapidly being worked out in the hearts and consciences of those most directly concerned.

I am sending a copy of this communication to each of the Senators from Tennessee and from Mississippi, my native State.

Very sincerely,



C. WAYLAND BROOKS, ILL., CHAIRMAN  
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ALBERT L. SEIDEL, CLERK

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

May 24, 1948

Mr. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Memphis 3, Tennessee

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

I appreciate having received a copy  
of your letter to Senator Morse. I found your  
viewpoint interesting and informative.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

U. S. Senator

CHM:g